

(d) Comments

Claim 15 has been added in accordance with the suggestions of the Examiner, and is the first new independent claim.

Claim 18 is a new independent claim which introduces the linear, pointed edge of the compression member, which slides parallel to the sharpened edge of the first (higher) cutting blade, and creates a shear force on the pill with the compression member on one side and the first cutting blade on the other, which causes the pill to shear along a line between the compression member and first cutting blade. As the pill shears along that line, the two pieces continue to be forced downward against the sharpened edge of the second cutting blade, even though the compression member engages the pill in a line perpendicular to the second cutting blade.

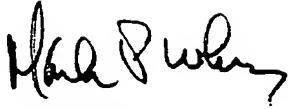
This can be seen from Figure 3, as well as the description of paragraphs (0024)-(0027). In addition, paragraph (0031) makes it clear that the bottom edge of the plunger which strikes the pill (i.e. the compression member) is pointed, (i.e. reduced in cross section) at the bottom, where it engages the pill directly above the upper, or first blade of the cruciate assembly, thus concentrating the force created by a blow on the plunger cap directly onto that portion of the pill which lies directly above the first blade of the cruciate assembly.

Figure 3 makes it clear that the compression member is constrained to remain parallel to the first blade by means of the guide slots, which also align the pill bed, so that the pill remains fixed relative to the cruciate assembly. In addition, because the plunger guides remain mated to the guide slots, the compression member remains at all times directly above the first blade as it slides toward the pill.

None of the references cited by the Examiner contain a structure similar to the compression member which remains constrained in its travel in a way identical or similar to the present invention.

It is believed that the amendments provided herein traverse the Examiner's objections. Accordingly, the applicant respectfully request the Examiner allow the amended claims presented above.

Respectfully submitted on February 28, 2005 by Attorney for the Applicant.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark P. White". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mark" being more prominent.

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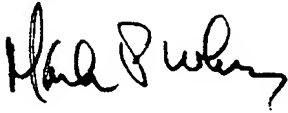
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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark P. White", with a stylized, cursive script.

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